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ABSTRACT

What teachers consider to be "discipline problems" are determined by their own culture, and filtered through personal values and teaching styles. Therefore, to manage diverse classrooms effectively, it is essential for teachers to understand what constitutes good classroom discipline within the context of cultural diversity. The first section of the fastback discusses three major components of classroom discipline: (1) preventive strategies, such as knowledge of cultural differences, child development, materials and subject matter, and interpersonal relations and planning skills; (2) intervention strategies, such as rules, expectations, and punishments and rewards; and (3) strategies to use when a classroom rule does not cover the situation, such as in "saving face" situations that are important in Asian cultures. Then, how teachers and administrators can improve the discipline environment of their schools is examined from a traditional "American" perspective and from a multicultural perspective. Finally, how teachers and parents can improve communication and work as partners in the education of culturally and linguistically different children is explored. (Contains 10 references.) (ND)

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Management Strategies for Culturally Diverse Classrooms

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Management Strategies for Culturally Diverse Classrooms

by
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The Relationship Between Discipline and Culture

> The word discipline strikes more fear into the hearts of teachers than it does into the hearts of misbehaving students.
>
> Kronowitz (1992, p. 55)

Some students will misbehave in school. Apart from individual explanations for misbehavior, various experts suggest a number of general, social explanations for student misbehavior. These reasons range from gang membership, violence in the neighborhood, and child abuse in the home to pervasive changes in the structure of the modern family. However, a simple lack of understanding and sensitivity on the part of teachers and students toward cultures different from their own may be an underlying cause of many incidents of classroom misbehavior.

In today's schools a culturally and linguistically diverse population is the rule rather than the exception. The experts say that it is not uncommon for as many as 100 cultures or languages to be represented within a sin-

gle school district (National Forum 1990). Thus cultural differences may be a fundamental social explanation for misbehavior, quite apart from other social explanations.

Consider the following categories of misbehaviors summarized by Charles (1992, p. vi):

1. Aggression — physical and verbal attacks by students on the teacher or other students.
2. Immorality — acts such as cheating, lying, and stealing.
3. Defiance of authority — where students refuse, sometimes with hostility, to do what the teacher tells them to do.
4. Class disruptions — talking loudly, calling out, walking about the room, clowning, tossing objects, and so forth.
5. Goofing off — fooling around, not doing assigned tasks, daydreaming, and so forth.

Even though these categories seem to be universally accepted as encompassing most classroom discipline problems, some teachers do not realize that most of the activities in these categories are culturally bound. For example, consider the bugaboo of all classroom disruptions, "talking out." An African-American girl enthusiastically "blurts out" a remark during a spirited class discussion on slavery. She is reprimanded by the teacher for breaking the "no talking without being recognized" rule. The student then becomes defiant because she was punished for what she considered to be "normal" behavior. Failure to understand the cultural context of the situation allows the incident to escalate. In the context of the teacher's culture, the classroom dis-

cussion required communication through serial exchanges (taking turns speaking and listening), whereas the black child's cultural experience called for spontaneous expression. Thus the fundamental conflict between the teacher's and the student's cultural norms gave rise to the problem.

What teachers consider to be "discipline problems" are determined by their own culture filtered through personal values and teaching style. Therefore, in order to manage diverse classrooms more effectively, it is essential for teachers to better understand what constitutes good classroom discipline within the context of cultural diversity.

This fastback begins by defining effective classroom discipline as it is affected by cultural contexts. We then discuss how teachers and administrators can improve the discipline environment of their schools. Finally, we examine how teachers and parents can improve communication and work as partners in the education of culturally and linguistically different children.

Clearly, the limited definition of discipline is keeping order. We believe that good discipline results not only from direct attention to rules, expectations, and consequences, but also from helping children and their parents to feel at ease in their dealings with teachers and administrators. Thus, in the following sections, we attempt to address the notion of discipline in both the narrower and broader senses.

Discipline Defined

Before teachers can employ strategies to accommodate diverse cultures and still maintain a safe and orderly classroom through sound discipline practices, it is necessary to understand the nature of effective classroom management in a cultural context. There are three major components to classroom discipline: 1) things teachers do to prevent disruptions, 2) intervention strategies teachers employ once a disruption has occurred to reduce the likelihood of it happening again, and 3) strategies to use under special circumstances where a classroom rule does not cover the situation.

Prevention Strategies

Six areas of understanding are important: 1) knowledge of cultural differences, 2) knowledge of child growth and development, 3) interpersonal relations skills, 4) planning skills, 5) knowledge of materials, and 6) knowledge of subject matter. These areas are interactive and rarely are applied in isolation. Thus sound prevention practices often require teachers to consider all six together. Classroom disruptions rarely result

from insufficient skills in one area, but rather from a deficit in two or more at the same time.

How does mastery of these skills prevent classroom misbehavior? The following vignettes taken from actual classroom situations illustrate how a lack of expertise in any given area can lead to student misbehavior.

Lack of knowledge about cultural differences. During a class discussion, Junko, a Japanese-American student, was asked by the teacher why she thought children should have an allowance for their own personal expenses. When she side-stepped the question by simply stating that she did not know, the teacher made an issue out of the conversation by asking the student further questions designed to probe the child's mind and "draw her out" of her perceived shyness. The teacher's behavior resulted in Junko's becoming further withdrawn to a point where she was reluctant to write a follow-up essay on the subject.

Although the teacher meant well, what she failed to realize was that Japanese elders frown on children asking and answering "why" questions and that Junko was clinging to her cultural norms by evading the teacher's question. She was operating under the principle that communication flows from higher to lower positions in the traditional Japanese hierarchy, and it is considered inappropriate for Japanese children to participate in adult conversation or decision making. In addition, those growing up in the Japanese culture consider the issue of money to be a very personal matter and an improper topic for discussion in a public forum, such as a

classroom. Had the teacher been more sensitive to Junko's cultural perspective, she could have altered the questions and the essay assignment to accommodate Junko's cultural values.

Lack of knowledge about child growth and development. A sixth-grade teacher knew that teacher praise was a good way to reinforce appropriate behavior. However, he was surprised at the reaction of some of his students when he singled them out for recognition by making comments such as, "Ontiwan, I like the way you're sitting today." Subsequently, he found that students like Ontiwan became more and more unruly as a result of this attention and actually went out of their way to be disruptive so the teacher would not identify them as "goody-goodies" in the eyes of their peers. Ontiwan's negative behavior could have been prevented if the teacher had better understood that sixth-graders look toward their peers, not the teacher, for validation of behavior.

Poor interpersonal relations skills. When questioned by the teacher about a quarrel that had taken place at recess, Damon, a black student, looked at the floor and shuffled his feet "nervously." This behavior was interpreted as both an admission of involvement and a "bad attitude" on Damon's part, and so the teacher directed him to sit on a bench to "think about" his role in the incident. The fact was that Damon had nothing to do with the altercation. Had the teacher known that African Americans do not have to maintain direct eye contact while talking to people or that nonverbal behavior like

the shuffling of feet are not indicators of dishonesty, the incident could have been handled more effectively.

Too often in the area of nonverbal behavior, teachers interpret black youngsters' stylized sulking gestures and body movements as an expression of resistance that challenges school authority. This illustrates how differences in communication style can result in misunderstanding. Unfortunately, "attitude" is considered more important than academic achievement in many school settings (Pai 1990).

Poor planning skills. A third-grade teacher assigned her class a project in cutting and folding paper sheep, which required 13 steps to complete. She gave the class the directions in advance and set them to work. Although she allowed 50 minutes for the activity, she noticed that the majority claimed they had "finished" within 10 minutes and were finding other things to do, most of which were disruptive. She also noticed that most of the children were unable to follow the complex directions and were confused about what was expected. Those who really finished had produced products that looked more like unidentifiable blobs than sheep.

Had the teacher given the directions one step at a time, the project could have been completed within 15 minutes, and many of the classroom disruptions would have been prevented. Lack of good planning and knowledge of child growth and development combined in this case.

Lack of knowledge of materials and how they work. One first-grade teacher planned a lesson involving cutting

out a paper pumpkin shape for a Halloween art project. During the lesson, she noticed that four of her students had become "disenchanted" with the activity because of their frustration with not being able to make their scissors work. As a result of this frustration, each of the four began to "act out," disrupting other students in the class.

Later the teacher discovered that all of the "culprits" were left-handed and were having difficulty not because of immature small-motor skills, but because the right-handed scissors they had been given would not work for them. Had the teacher known about left-handed scissors and provided them to the children, the misbehaviors could have been prevented.

Lack of subject matter knowledge. A middle school teacher who admitted that he was poor in math was presenting a lesson on factoring. As he was explaining how the process worked, he constantly referred to the teacher's edition of the text to "check" the steps. "Hacking" his way through the procedures prompted some of the students to ask questions for clarification, none of which the teacher was able to answer. Others became restless while the teacher became visibly nervous. Sensing the insecurity of the instructor, the class became more and more unruly, causing the teacher to stop the lesson and take disciplinary action with several of the students.

In this case, an obvious lack of knowledge about factoring made the teacher ineffective in the eyes of the students and lowered the teacher's self-confidence.

Consequently, the disrespect for the teacher created by this situation was the direct cause of the students' disruptions. Being more knowledgeable about the subject matter would have raised the confidence of the teacher and prevented many of the class misbehaviors.

Intervention Strategies

Intervention strategies are activated through 1) rules, 2) expectations, and 3) punishments and rewards. Difficulties arise when teachers mix the first two. The reason is that rules are applicable across cultural lines; expectations are not.

Rules. Classroom rules need to be clear and precise. They should communicate desired behaviors to all students, regardless of cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

Classroom rules are designed to control classroom behavior. They are best stated in a simple, direct manner. Stating rules "positively" and giving children a say in the selection of rules (the democratic approach) may not be the best approach. First of all, "positive" rules, such as "raise your hand to speak," do not communicate clearly. Does this mean that a child must ask permission to speak during a cooperative-group activity? This is like a city regulation saying, "Please find a place other than here to put your car," when the message is, "No Parking."

A better way is to state the rule directly: "No talking without permission," permission being the operant word. Permission can then be communicated in a num-

ber of ways using such classroom conventions as raised hands or turning the lights off and on; or students can be given permission to talk in certain situations, such as during cooperative-group activities.

Second, the "democratic" approach, where the students generate their own rules, often is ineffective and dishonest. Unless teachers are willing to allow gum chewing because the children do not feel that "no gum chewing" is a reasonable rule, they should develop a reasonable list of classroom rules themselves, based on the behaviors they desire to encourage or prevent. "Guiding" a class to come up with a set of rules the teacher had in mind in the first place is merely manipulation of children's behavior and does not model real decision making.

Effective classroom rules must meet the following criteria: 1) They must be needed; 2) they must be applied equally to all students; and 3) they must be enforceable.

The first criterion should be obvious. Creating unnecessary rules is a useless exercise. Why prohibit activities that are not likely to occur? Likewise, the third criterion is common sense. If there is no way to require that children follow a rule or no consequence for breaking a rule, why make the rule?

The second criterion can cause some teachers problems if they confuse rules with expectations. It is important to consider this question: Does a child break a rule because he or she cannot follow it or will not follow it? For example, "No getting out of your seat without permission" is a rule that children generally can follow if they choose to do so. However, "Follow directions"

is not a good rule, because some children may not be able to follow it. Physical, linguistic, or cultural differences may make it impossible for some children at some times to follow directions.

"Follow directions" is a reasonable expectation, but it is not a good rule. Similarly, "Do your best work" and "Respect the rights of others" are important to emphasize. But they are expectations, not rules. Following are several time-tested rules:

No talking without permission.
No getting out of your seat without permission.
No eating in the classroom without permission.
No gum chewing.
No put-downs or foul language.
No running without permission.
Keep your hands and feet to yourself.

Expectations. A key difference between rules and expectations is that rules are applied universally and expectations are either rewarded or punished depending on the individual circumstances. For example, a teacher expected his students to do their homework. William and Maria both failed to do theirs. William did not do his homework because he chose instead to watch TV. Maria did not do hers because she speaks little English and there was no one at home to explain the assignment and to help her with her work.

The next day, William lost his recess time in order to make up his homework assignment, while Maria was given extra help and materials during school so that she

could manage another homework assignment due the following day. If "Do your homework on time" were a rule, both students would have had to pay the same consequences.

Many children from divergent cultures cannot live up to expectations without special help because they operate from a different framework of cultural or linguistic norms. Therefore, it is the teacher's responsibility to provide appropriate support for all students. Following are reasonable classroom expectations for most children:

Respect the rights and property of others.
Follow directions.
Work quietly in the classroom.
Complete assignments on time.
Be kind and courteous.
Do your best at all times.
Be prepared.

Punishments and Rewards. Because consequences must be applied fairly to all students, it is important to put some thought into them. Most effective teachers advocate some sort of increasingly arduous system, usually starting with a warning and ending with administrative intervention. To establish an effective discipline system, three principles apply: 1) Punishment must act as a negative reinforcer; 2) each day should begin as a "clean slate"; and 3) linguistic and cultural differences must be taken into account when selecting consequences.

First, punishment must act as a negative reinforcer. A punishment that is viewed as "positive" does not

change behavior. For example, one third-grade teacher listed "staying in at recess" as one of her intermediate consequences. After a few weeks of implementing her system, she noticed that more and more students were having to stay in during recess. What she did not realize was that several of her students actually enjoyed the attention they got by staying in and looked on this "punishment" as something positive. A more appropriate consequence might have been some sort of "time-out" or "in-house suspension."

In-house suspension is where students are required to go to another classroom in the building under the supervision of a predesignated, cooperative teacher. The critical aspect of this alternative is that arrangements should be made to place students in situations at least three grades different from their assigned level. This way the individual is less likely to turn the consequence into a positive experience by interacting with members of the host class.

A note of caution is needed: Teachers need to choose consequences that do not "punish" themselves. Too often teachers choose such consequences as having students stay in during recess or after school. Over time, these punishments can become counterproductive to efficient time management.

Second, teachers and students should start each day off with a clean slate. Consequences should be swift in their execution. Assigning consequences that extend from one day to the next or are "compounded" may cause students to develop a negative attitude toward coming to school.

Third, teachers must take linguistic and cultural differences into account when consequences are selected. Above all, consequences must be fair. Although children generally have a good grasp of "fairness," what is fair often is culturally connected. That is, what is rewarding or punishing to a particular learner depends on the cultural environment. Patting the top of a child's head may be rewarding in one society, but insulting in a different culture. "Yelling" at a child is likely to have much more punitive meaning to white middle-class children than to Asian youngsters, who often are more accustomed to being "yelled at" by their parents while growing up.

An American student attending school in Malaysia would be appalled if he received a "caning" for some classroom infraction, because corporal punishment is frowned on in this country. However, teachers are not always sensitive in situations where things are reversed. For example, one teacher's consequence was to have children copy words and their definitions out of the dictionary. To punish a student by having her do this work seemed ridiculous to an Asian girl because she perceived this activity as being academic in nature and, therefore, a desirable endeavor.

Although one person's punishment may be another's reward, most rewards cut across cultural lines. All children seem to like such tangible things as stickers, small toys, and M&Ms. However, there are two areas of caution that teachers should consider when selecting rewards for language-minority and culturally different youngsters. The first concerns group rewards.

Students coming from African-American, Hispanic, and Native American cultures generally respond positively to group rewards (point systems or group praise) to motivate them to choose appropriate classroom behavior. On the other hand, some Asian Americans are not likely to participate actively in classroom discussions or cooperative learning situations or to seek explanations or other forms of help from teachers and their peers. Therefore, group rewards are less motivational to this population.

A second area of concern has to do with teacher attention. Such attention can be given in the form of greetings, short talks, compliments, acknowledgments, smiles, and friendly eye contact. This approach has been shown to be an effective motivator across cultures with respect to academic work. However, it sometimes has a negative impact when it comes to behavior. For example, certain cultures distrust the "white, middle-class" education system because their values conflict with many of those held by the school and the community. Therefore, many students from these groups resent teacher praise. These students are concerned that, if their behavior is approved by the "establishment," they will run the risk of becoming "white" and lose the respect of their cultural group. As a result, youngsters in this category rely on their peers for validation of appropriate behavior. Thus teachers need to give positive attention in the form of private conversations, rather than public proclamations.

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Special Circumstances

Even with excellent teaching skills and superior rules and expectations, classroom situations will occur that are not covered by either prevention or intervention. These include behaviors that fall into the category of "What do you do with a kid who . . ." tattles, clings, cries, feigns illness or injury, constantly falls out of his or her seat, frequently breaks his or her pencil, bites, lies, steals, cheats, and so on. These behaviors must be addressed on an individual basis; and the remedy usually manifests itself in some sort of behavior modification strategy or, better yet, an individual contract. However, it is critical to identify the cause of the behavior before taking steps to correct it, because the cause might be cultural in origin.

For example, "saving face" is important in most Asian cultures. Children from this background often communicate indirectly and emphasize discreteness so as not to embarrass themselves or their family. When asked about an incident involving a missing pencil found broken in a Chinese-American boy's math book, the innocent Chinese-American boy chose "to bend the truth" through vagueness and omission in his response by shrugging his shoulders and uttering that he thought he had seen somebody take the pencil but could not remember whom. The fact was that he had seen the girl sitting next to him take the pencil and break it in a "pencil fight," but he did not see her dispose of it by putting it in his math book. However, as the teacher was unable to illicit a "straight answer" from the boy as to how the

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broken pencil got in his math book, the teacher interpreted the boy's statement as a "lie." And so the teacher concluded that the boy was the culprit, and he was required to replace the pencil as his punishment.

To punish the boy for lying instead of trying to understand his cultural frame of reference to get at the truth led to unfortunate consequences for both the student and the teacher. The boy "lost face" and the teacher made a mistake as to the identity of the rule-breaker. A better solution would have been to work within the student's cultural framework, where vagueness and omission are not indicators of guilt. Thus the teacher might have probed deeper and found out the truth.

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Changing the Discipline Environment

In order for teachers to change the discipline environment of their classrooms to accommodate cultural differences, it is necessary to begin by examining two perspectives, the traditional "American" perspective and the multicultural perspective.

The "American" Perspective

Often inaccurately labeled "American," the traditional culture of many American schools has been described as adhering to a fluid set of core values, embodying, for example, "puritan morality," a "work-success ethic," individualism, an achievement orientation, and a "future-time orientation" (Pai 1990). These values have resulted in several common practices. For example, "puritan morality" dictates that there be separate toilets for boys and girls, and the "work-success ethic" drives homework policies. Individualism emphasizes independent work, which theoretically leads to self-reliance and originality (but as often results in a form of ego-

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centrism and disregard for other's rights and desires). Classroom spelling competition charts with gold stars for 100% scores on tests can be attributed to achievement orientation, which communicates the notion that students should strive to accomplish goals that are higher and better than everyone else's. Finally, "future-time orientation" can best be illustrated by the numerous tasks that second-grade children are asked to perform that have no current relevance or meaning to them, but which are rationalized by teachers by saying, "You're going to need this when you get to junior high school."

This is not to say that children from various cultures do not hold one or more of these traditional core values or that these values — or theirs — are somehow "wrong." Rather, a part of their value system may be in direct opposition to this traditional perspective. Consequently, it is not surprising that children coming from diverse cultures may have difficulty adjusting to some of the customs and practices of many traditional classrooms.

The Multicultural Perspective

To work effectively with students who are culturally and linguistically different from the dominant culture, teachers must know about children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It also is important to be sensitive to the degree of conflict these children experience in relating to the mainstream society, because the culture of the home and the culture of the school may be quite different. (See fastback 340 *Mainstreaming Language Minority Children in Reading and Writing.*)

The dominant culture in most American schools is white and European in origin. Four major cultural groups outside the dominant culture also are represented in our nation's schools: Asian Pacific, African American, Hispanic, and Native American. However, these cultural distinctions are very general. A wide variety of complex beliefs, attitudes, values, and cognitive styles are found within both dominant and minority cultures; and all groups contain innumerable subcultures.

An example of differences within a culture is the way different Native American groups handle disobedient children. Papagos, living in the desert Southwest, rarely employ discipline of any kind on children under 10 years old, believing that children should not be made to suffer. On the other hand, Winnebago parents prefer to have a little girl who is disobedient fast for a short time, perhaps one meal, so that while she is hungry she can reflect on her misdeeds (Neithammer 1977).

To address this type of diversity, teachers must begin by improving the psychosocial environment of their classrooms.

Improving the Psychosocial Environment

"Psychosocial" refers to the way students perceive and respond to the interactions between themselves and other students and with the teacher in the classroom. To develop a psychosocial environment that is welcoming to students from diverse cultures, teachers need to use a multiplicity of approaches to discipline. Prevention of many common misbehaviors can be achieved by de-

veloping organizational and instructional strategies designed to accommodate culturally and linguistically diverse students. To do this, teachers need to take a look at the way they manage daily routines and structure the physical environment in their classrooms.

Kronowitz (1992, p.43) suggests a list of teacher behaviors that are conducive to creating a secure emotional environment where all children are made to feel comfortable and "part of the group." Developing these teacher behaviors can alleviate potential misbehaviors before they begin by conveying a positive attitude toward children and enhancing their self-concept. Some of the teacher behaviors associated with a positive psychosocial environment are:

- Smiling when appropriate.
- Calling each child by name.
- Saying something complimentary to each child each day.
- Actively listening and responding to what children have to say.
- Telling appropriate personal stories about the teacher's experiences.
- Moving around the classroom in physical proximity to all children.
- Using cooperative learning strategies to develop a sense of belonging.
- Encouraging active participation activities.
- Giving immediate feedback.
- Allowing children choices in the content areas whenever possible.

Daily Routines. During the course of the day there are routines that need to be followed in order to provide a smooth-running program with a minimum number of disturbances. Because many of these routines prescribe some sort of movement around the room on the part of the students, they require thought and planning to implement. Examples of these routines are: management of restroom and water fountain privileges, sharpening pencils and throwing away rubbish, entering and leaving the room, and the selection of room monitors.

Overall, the key to successful routine management is communication of expected behaviors. For language-minority and culturally different students, such communication may require the teacher to explain the language and customs of the school culture in order to avoid misunderstandings based on faulty assumptions. For example, restroom and drinking fountain habits vary from culture to culture. The procedure used by most teachers in this country is to allow students specific times (such as recess) to take care of these needs. If a student urgently needs to use the restroom during class, most teachers have a contingency plan that requires students to take some sort of "restroom pass" with them as a signal to other teachers or administrators that the student is authorized to be outside the classroom. In our experience, such passes range from a simple card or placard inscribed with the words "bathroom pass" to more elaborate icons, such as bricks, toilet seat covers, or in the case of one science teacher, a petrified frog on a stick.

However, children from other cultures may not be familiar with this convention. In rural Mexico, for in-

stance, there may be only one bathroom that is used by both boys and girls. Mexican students may be allowed to leave the classroom any time they want to use the facilities. Therefore, it is important for the teacher to explain to recent Mexican immigrants the routine at their new school and to teach these children the appropriate language necessary to manage their needs. If the teachers are not familiar with students' native languages or cultures, they can assign classmates with a similar background to assist these youngsters by "showing them the ropes."

This type of teaching focuses on basic interpersonal communicative skills, or BICS. This is a construct originally developed by James Cummins (1981) to refer to aspects of language proficiency strongly associated with the basic communicative fluency, which is readily acquired by native speakers of a language. BICS are not highly correlated with fluency and academic achievement because they are limited to the "language of need and survival" — the language of routine, in other words.

Entering and leaving the classroom is another routine. Most effective teachers ask the students to line up before entering and communicate their expectations for good behavior before the children are allowed to set foot in the classroom. For example, a teacher might say, "Boys and girls, before we go into the room, I want to let you know that your journals are on your desks and that I expect you to walk quietly to your seats, open your journals, and begin writing on the topic written on the board."

Leaving the room can be handled in the same manner, or the teacher can opt to dismiss the class by groups

or individuals. Individualized short-answer questions based on the day's lesson are a good way for children to "earn" dismissal. A teacher might ask, "Mario, can you give me the name of something that starts with the letter P?" Mario's correct answer earns him the privilege of leaving first, and so on.

Finally, another example of a classroom convention is answering the teacher's questions. The usual way for children to be recognized in American schools is by the raising of one hand. However, children who have had experience in another culture's schools may respond differently. Those who have attended schools based on the British system might stand in order to speak to the teacher. (This is sometimes the case for parochial school students who transfer to public school.) Children from some Latin American countries may feel free to express themselves at any time without waiting to be formally recognized.

To help all students feel comfortable, it is important to have the children who understand the conventions model correct behaviors before calling on "new" pupils for responses in front of the class. Nonverbal cues such as this have been shown to be especially effective with most classes of newcomers.

Later, so that all language-minority and culturally diverse students will have equal access to learning, the teacher should call on students at random. Otherwise, only the most verbal students are likely to be recognized. One way to ensure equal participation by all students during class discussions is for the teacher to write each child's name on a card or wooden tongue-depres-

sor and then choose students at random to respond to teacher-initiated questions.

Choosing classroom monitors or helpers also can enhance the psychosocial environment and help make routines run smoothly. Classroom jobs fall into two basic categories: 1) those anyone can do and 2) those that require special skills or responsibilities. Examples of the former include room or table cleanup, passing papers, erasing the chalkboard, greeting students at the door, and monitoring the flag and calendar. These jobs can be assigned using a class list or lottery approach.

Special skills or responsibilities may be required of students who are chosen to be the teacher's aide or messenger, to monitor the audiovisual equipment, to monitor physical education activities, to take care of the classroom pet or plants, and so on. Appointing students to take care of these jobs on a rotating basis teaches responsibility, but also requires sound teacher judgment. For example, the class messenger is required to take materials, including lunch money in some cases, to other rooms or the school office. A child with a record of misbehavior may not be counted on until he or she has had time to prove responsibility in other, more controlled ways.

Physical Environment. According to Kronowitz (1992), a satisfactory physical environment in classrooms includes appropriate ventilation and temperature control, adequate lighting, colorful bulletin boards, cleanliness, teacher visibility, and an appropriate seating arrangement. Although most of these factors are not concerns

in culturally diverse classrooms because they need to be considered to accommodate all children, bulletin boards and the way children's desks are arranged warrant discussion.

Bulletin boards fall into three categories: information, interaction, and publication. Information bulletin boards display classroom rules, daily schedules, and model papers, such as one showing how to head a paper or how to punctuate an essay. These bulletin boards are helpful for all students, but they are essential for culturally different students who are trying to learn classroom conventions.

Interactive bulletin boards ask such questions as, "Are you doing your best work today?" or invite children to participate in an activity, such as helping to change the date on the calendar. One way teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students can take advantage of interactive bulletin boards is to extend the interactive concept by labeling objects in the classroom. This strategy provides a practical, print-rich environment in which the names of familiar objects, such as the "clock," the "pencil sharpener," and the "sink," are labeled in English. Talking about these labels (part of the interaction) reinforces the oral vocabulary of the language-minority children. And the teacher may assign writing projects that use the posted vocabulary, such as asking the students to describe the classroom.

Publication bulletin boards display children's work. This area requires particular sensitivity. A teacher should not make the mistake of putting up all the examples of one assignment showing a range of student perfor-

mances from excellent to poor, because language-minority youngsters may be at a disadvantage and will suffer by comparison to native English speakers. Rather, the teacher might create an "individualized" bulletin board, where each child has his or her own space and is given the autonomy to choose what he or she displays in it. In this way, what is worthy of publication is determined by the individual, not the teacher; and children can feel pride in what they select to share with others.

The way teachers arrange their desks in their classrooms depends on their teaching style, goals for student behavior, and the "personality" of the class. For example, if a teacher uses mostly lectures and large-group discussions, putting children in rows facing the front of the room can be effective. Because it is easy to monitor, this configuration also is the most efficient way to cut down on common classroom disturbances, such as unwarranted talking. However, in classrooms where communication and language development are high priorities, some sort of cluster plan is preferred. Clustering student desks especially suits culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms because it not only encourages communication among students during appropriate times, but also lends itself nicely to group work involving centers, stations, or cooperative groups.

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Parents and Teachers: Partners in Multilingual and Multicultural Education

Parent involvement in the educational process always has been considered an important ingredient in successful schooling. However, even though teachers often say that they want to involve parents, many teachers are reluctant to encourage parents to participate in classroom activities beyond baking cookies or accompanying the class on a field trip. Some reasons for this reluctance include the notion that parents may disrupt the classroom routine, may not have the necessary skills to work well with children, or may be interested in helping only their child rather than the whole class. From some teachers' perspective, this is especially true where parents of culturally different or language-minority youngsters are concerned.

Some teachers also are hesitant to invite these parents to become involved simply because they feel uncom-

fortable dealing with families from cultures different from their own. These teachers will feel more at ease if they take time to find out all they can about their students' backgrounds. This learning can be enhanced by reading books or taking courses about diversity.

Parents also have concerns about becoming involved with schools. For example, some parents of language-minority or culturally different children see parent involvement as the school's way to help "deficient" parents. This perception is counter-productive, particularly if parents are led to believe that they are the cause of their children's poor performance. Such feelings create a competition for the child's loyalty and affection between parents and teachers.

Parents develop their attitudes toward school from their own cultural perspectives and their own school experiences. Thus many cross-cultural parents look on the role of the school and its teachers differently than do their "mainstream" counterparts. Many foreign-born and foreign-educated parents see no need to become involved in the schools. When they arrive in the United States, Vietnamese parents, Sikh parents from the Punjab in northwestern India, and Hmong parents from Laos, among others, have no cultural history of being active, collaborative parents who visit their children's schools several times each year.

From the perspective of many foreign cultures, home is home and school is school. If their children are well-behaved and doing well in school, they see no reason to visit. For example, Mexican-American parents' traditional view is that the teacher is the absolute authority in the

classroom. The teacher is not to be questioned or challenged about curricular or behavioral decisions. The parents' role is simply to be supportive of teachers and to stay out of their way. Responsibility for their children's education rests solely on teachers, and so these parents are reluctant to "interfere."

In working with culturally different families, it is helpful for school people to assume that there may be significant differences between the culture of the school and the culture and language of the home. By so doing, teachers and administrators can act to contradict misperceptions. Thus many effective schools can take steps to involve parents in their daily routines and can encourage parents to give input into the curriculum.

Dealing with Cultural Conflicts

First of all, teachers must be aware that cultures sometimes do "clash." The values and behaviors of the foreign culture may conflict with those of the American mainstream. For example, some cultures define gender roles in ways that are at odds with American notions of gender. A case in point is Arabic societies, in which equality of educational opportunities for males and females is not valued. Parents from these societies may want their boys to be prepared for admission into four-year colleges, while their goal for girls is merely that they master the skills necessary to make them good marriage partners.

An extreme example of gender role conflict can be illustrated by this situation: A teacher came across a

Turkish boy giving his sister a severe beating outside the school gates because he saw her talking to boys during the morning recess. In Turkish culture, a strong value is a girl's honor, which is maintained by avoiding contact with the opposite sex. Thus the brother was "protecting" his sister by invoking the sanctions associated with such a value (Bullivant 1989). This situation presented the teacher with a dilemma: Should the teacher intervene and criticize this traditional practice in the interests of protecting the girl from physical harm? Or should the teacher ignore the beating in the interest of preserving the cultural values of that society, recognizing that in so doing the girl might be seriously injured?

When there is a conflict with an important school value, such as gender equity and equality of the sexes, teachers often find themselves caught in such a dilemma. On one hand, they can hold that another's cultural standards, values, and norms are not equivalent to their own and use this "high ground" as justification for criticizing what they find objectionable in the other culture. However, when teachers do this, they risk being labeled "culturally insensitive" or even "racist." On the other hand, teachers can take the posture of cultural relativism. This means that every culture is unique and should not be criticized on the basis of another culture's values — in essence, "anything goes."

We believe that the solution to this dilemma lies in a third position, in which teachers can have it both ways. Cultural customs can be held to be immune from criticism *provided they occur within the social structure of an*

ethnic community. But, because schools are part of the public culture shared by many groups, the shared norms of behavior *within the mainstream American society* should prevail when ethnic customs conflict with school norms.

Communicating with Parents

Many culture clashes can be prevented or resolved through communication between the school and the home. But effective communication must begin from a base of understanding about cultures different from the American mainstream.

One goal of cross-cultural parent-teacher communication is to establish collaborative relationships. Most parents are willing to become involved in their children's education if they are told what the teacher is trying to accomplish and what the parents are expected to do. One step toward achieving this end is actively soliciting information from parents on their thoughts about classroom goals and activities. However, gaining this input may require teachers and administrators to work at communication in new ways.

Parents must be helped to feel comfortable in the school setting. Teachers can begin by being good listeners, of course; but that may not be enough. The school may need to employ a translator to ensure accurate communication. And teachers may need to understand subtle, nonverbal communication that is culture-bound. For example, most mainstream Americans believe that direct eye-contact facilitates communication, but traditional

Vietnamese and some Native American parents are made uncomfortable by a teacher who constantly tries to look them in the eye while talking.

A loud voice, informality, and lack of awareness of the parents' family structure also may cause uneasiness, especially among recent immigrants who have not yet learned American customs or simply do not value the American inclination to ask relative strangers the most intimate questions and to do so in public places (Davidman and Davidman 1994). Until teachers get to know these parents, they should avoid asking questions that touch on the relationships between parents and their children, such as matters pertaining to child-rearing and discipline.

Teachers also should be careful not to give parents advice on nonacademic matters. If parents ask about matters outside teachers' normal expertise, they should be referred to school nurses, psychologists, counselors, or other trained experts.

Teachers should reach out to language-minority and culturally diverse parents and not wait for them to initiate communication. This may require a phone call, a note home, or a newsletter explaining the curriculum and important procedures, such as classroom discipline and homework policies. If possible, written communications should be in English *and* the child's native language.

Because many parents in this population do not expect to make contact with the teacher in settings other than the school, getting to know the students' community is another excellent way to communicate that teachers are interested in the child as a whole person. Taking time

to shop in local neighborhoods, visiting community centers, and participating in local events and festivals let parents know that teachers care about their culture and are available to talk to them in a nonschool setting. Home visits also are effective ways to make contact with parents.

Helping Parents to Help Their Children

Many minority parents *seem* unwilling to help their children with school. But the truth is that they simply do not know what to do. Therefore, it is important for teachers to send home a list of specific suggestions that parents can follow. For example, teachers should try to give homework assignments that reinforce previously learned material, not introduce new information that requires parents to tackle unknown material. Some parents may not have the language or teaching skills to help their child with unfamiliar work. Better yet, teachers should tie homework to home activities so that parents are not threatened by material they do not understand. Kronowitz suggests several examples of this kind of activity, including writing down all the ingredients on a soup can label in alphabetical order, taking a favorite family recipe and tripling it, and writing out clear instructions on to how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich (1992, pp. 112-13).

Finally, teachers must communicate to parents that classroom discipline is a team effort. This involves face-to-face communication and reinforcing that information in writing, explaining the discipline plan and asking the

parents to go over the classroom procedures with their children so that everyone understands the rules, expectations, and consequences.

Two aspects of this communication are critical. First, if possible, the plan should be written in the parents' native language. Second, the written communication should provide a way for parents who have concerns to respond. If parents have culture-bound concerns with respect to classroom discipline, they should have the opportunity to voice their point of view — and teachers should be willing to consider modifying discipline plans in order to address diversity issues equitably. In this way, many misunderstandings that occur as a result of differences in cultural backgrounds can be prevented. This is especially important when religious matters are to be considered.

Conclusion

Classroom discipline has long been held as one of the most anxiety-producing aspects of teaching. This anxiety often is compounded when teaching children from linguistic-minority and culturally different backgrounds. Sensitive, well-meaning teachers do not want to offend these students and their parents, but they do want to develop fair and reasonable discipline practices for all of their students.

These two positions need not conflict. Teachers can advance reasonable discipline policies and accommodate culturally diverse students by implementing sound communication strategies that help teachers and parents to become partners in the education of the young.

To do this, teachers need to have: 1) knowledge of cultural differences, 2) knowledge of child growth and development, 3) interpersonal relations skills, 4) planning skills, and 5) knowledge of subject matter. They must develop a comprehensive, thoughtful discipline plan that separates rules from expectations and that embodies culture-sensitive consequences. They must create classrooms that are caring and that reflect cul-

tural awareness in order to prevent misunderstandings that result in student misbehavior. These psychosocial environments should be places where children experience the freedom to be individuals coupled with group responsibility and cooperation.

Finally, teachers need to become knowledgeable about the cultures of their students' families and to work with parents to bring them into the home-school partnership. They need to reach out from the school into the home and community of their students, taking time to learn about the languages and cultures represented in their classrooms.

In these ways, teachers can become sensitive to the needs of linguistic-minority and culturally different students and so structure their classrooms for effective discipline.

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